

February 27, 2015

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and Members of the Secondary Education Sub-committee:

My name is Antonia S. Thompson, I am writing to you to express my concern for the proposed cuts to Connecticut's Youth Services Bureaus (YSB) in Governor Malloy's budget. I am the Project Coordinator for the Stamford Youth Service Bureau- Restorative Justice Project and have previously been responsible for the Stamford Juvenile Review Board. Both of these programs are important and critical diversionary programs that prevent children from being excluded from schools for disciplinary problems and entering into the criminal justice system for status offenses. In addition, we provide preventative programming through various educational workshops that teach children about bullying, "Know the Law" (teaches the effect the criminal justice system can have on Juveniles in Connecticut) and other relevant topics effecting at-risk children.

I am an experience criminal defense attorney that has dedicated the last five years advocating and reaching out to at risk youth in Stamford. Although, I have chosen not to return to practicing law after raising my two children in Stamford, I have always been dedicated to the needs, development and support of at-risk children. I started as a volunteer with the Stamford Youth Services Bureau because I am passionate about its mandate and committed to serving all children in our town. I cannot agree more with the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance statement that the Youth Services Bureau across the State provide "programs and services that meet youth's needs before they enter into the deepest end of the juvenile justice system. They include trauma services, services for status offenders, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment and family therapy."¹

Additionally, I strongly oppose the movement of juvenile justice functions from the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch to the Department of Children and Families as well as the \$10 million in cuts of pre-adjudication services.

Created by Statue in 1978, our office is mandated to provide programming and services for the purpose of evaluating, planning, coordinating and implementing services, including prevention and intervention programs for delinquent, pre-delinquent, pregnant, young parents and troubled youth . Our office is responsible for coordinating community-based services that provide comprehensive delivery of prevention and intervention, treatment and follow-up services.²

Our office receives referrals from community, regional and state service providers, parents/guardians and the youth themselves. We provide direct services designed to provide supports and build assets for youth, including special populations such as justice involved youth, youth with mental health needs, other youth at risk, and youth needing services to enhance their education and career advancement. Our office currently operates the following programs, Pathfinders Camp, Mayors Youth Employment

¹ Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, February 27, 2015 budget hearing testimony.

² Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec 78-183

Program, Mayors Youth Leadership Council, Restorative Justice Project, Youth Employment Service and provides a myriad of additional support services through workshops, educational materials, trainings, community events, parent trainings and collaborations that support the positive development of children.

Governor Malloy's proposed cuts to YSB funding would create yet another gap in services and make families' abilities to receive necessary assistance even more difficult. As the budget season unfolds, I would like to strongly encourage you as our elected official to share this information with your fellow legislators and to make sure Governor Malloy knows how tragic these cuts would be for hundreds of thousands of Connecticut children and their families. This budget season please support Connecticut's Youth Services Bureaus and all who we serve.

Sincerely Yours,

Antonia Thompson